

June 2016

The Parish of Dentdale, beyond Sedbergh, in the Yorkshire Dales has a population of approximately 750 people. There are strong farming and family ties along the narrow 10 miles of the Dale and a sense of looking after your own. Significant numbers of people retire to the area and there are a large proportion of holiday homes in the Dale.

Background

In 2008 the Parish Council, together with the wider community, carried out a Parish Plan which identified key actions for the area. One of these was the need for stronger links with the Police. A local Neighbourhood Watch scheme was re-energized and has been growing since then.

Neighbourhood Watch is a strong local initiative in Dent, managed by local coordinators and reaching 50% of the permanently occupied households in the dale.

In the last 10 years the Neighbourhood Watch Group has become a more obvious presence in the community, more recently using the free Cumbria Community Messaging (CCM) service to assist with communications. Local coordinators keep people informed through the messaging service and pass on advice from statutory agencies.



Cumbria Community Messaging is a free and easy to join countywide messaging service.

The Police, Trading Standards, Environment Agency, Local authorities and local communities use it to keep in touch. Visit: www.cumbriacommunitymessaging.co.uk

The Project

The Neighbourhood Watch Group recognise that the isolated nature of the dale is a key feature when it comes to ensuring residents' safety. The community of Dentdale has a very strong culture of self help, among the farming community in particular, and unwritten support networks have existed for generations.



A Community Emergency Plan for Dentdale has been created to complement this, and to address events which affect a significant number of households at any one time, including those who may be outside these long established networks. The plan aims to facilitate a coordinated response to calls for assistance from anyone in the community.

The types of events which could trigger their Community Emergency Plan include: flooding, heavy snowfall, and long term power failure.

The plan aims to both prompt households to be better prepared to cope in an emergency, and to provide a structure to give support to those most adversely affected, particularly more vulnerable residents.

'Bad Weather Friends' are small groups of residents who have volunteered to check on vulnerable neighbours in their locality. The seven locality areas have been identified as they may be cut off from each other in extreme weather.

The Bad Weather Friends are promoted to action by Plan Co-ordinators when severe weather alerts are received via Community Messaging. In the recent floods the messaging service was used to help people be safe and stay in touch.



Isolated dwelling in Dentdale



Dent village

All residents have been encouraged to sign up to CCM, to receive updates as a situation develops. They are also advised to have at least one working analogue telephone for use in the event of power failure.

The plan includes how to liaise with and inform the statutory agencies of needs in the dale during an emergency, and what support the community provides for itself.

Details of: Emergency accommodation key holders; farmers with tractors the local WI and other volunteers who are simply willing to get out in bad weather and help.

The Learning

Having the Emergency Plan and the Bad Weather Friends helps to identify people who may be more affected in an emergency situation. This should mean that people feel safer.

Linking with Electricity North West, who provided analogue phones for the vulnerable households on their priority service register has been helpful and raised local awareness and understanding. Details of the Priority Service can be found here: <http://www.enwl.co.uk/our-services/electricity-priority-service-customer>.

The substantial, local Neighbourhood Watch organisation in Dent helped to make connections with all the residents - building on a successful local organisation is vital.

We have found that the name 'Bad Weather Friends' is attracting attention because it's catchy. The important thing to remember, however, is that the project is all about a community having a system to include all residents in its planning for emergencies.

Contact Details

Given the distribution of the Dales population, Dentdale's Emergency Plan has a team of seven Plan Co-ordinators and fourteen local coordinators who in an emergency work in seven groups.

For more information contact John Sibley on Tel: 015396 25024

Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association supports Neighbourhood Watch initiatives in Cumbria to create communities where everyone feels safe.

The Association is a charitable company run by volunteers. For more information, visit: <http://www.cumbria-nhw.org/>

ACT champions community and rural issues

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